

716.c.13.  
2  
*IL TASSO.*

A

*DIALOGUE.*

THE SPEAKERS,

*JOHN MILTON,  
TORQUATO TASSO.*

In which, New LIGHT is thrown on their  
POETICAL and MORAL CHARACTERS.

---

-----*Petimusque Damusque.*

HORAT.

---



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L O N D O N :

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M. DCC. LXII.

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A

# DIALOGUE

THE SPEAKERS

JOHN W. MILTON

108220

on this



PORTFOLIO OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

How

London



LONDON

Printed by H. Baskin, in Fleet-Street

M.DCC.LXX





# IL TASSO.

A

## DIALOGUE:

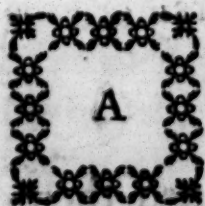
THE SPEAKERS,

JOHN MILTON---TORQUATO TASSO.

---

SCENE ELYSIUM.

MILTON.



L L hail great Bard! Tor-  
quato Tasso hail!

TASSO.

Well met illustrious Milton! As Fate  
has brought us to an interview, let us,  
as time permits, descant a while on that  
similitude which I am told subsisted be-  
tween us, as Poets of distinguished genius,  
and as men.

B

MILTON.

M I L T O N.

There are few things can give me greater pleasure. I own to you that I honoured your memory when living; and I was induced to this from the intrinsick merit which I perceived in all your writings, and from the written and oral accounts I had of you from our common friend Manfo\*.

T A S S O.

He was a true friend, and though my acquaintance with him was but short and late in life, yet there was none I more really esteemed. But to the business I proposed to you, and without farther preface. You are not unacquainted with the former part of my life, that I began to make verses as early as seven years.

M I L T O N.

True: but I presume you valued them but little when you came to years of maturity: had you thought them worth preserving you would doubtless have left them to posterity: the case was different with me: if I did not begin quite so early

\* Manfus, v. 7.



as yourself, yet I sat out sooner than the generality of our fraternity, and at fifteen produced some which I thought proper to retain, and of which I was never ashamed. But as to strength of genius little is to be inferred from such poetical blossoms. So a cotemporary Poet with me named a volume which he published at fifteen, when he was yet at school. Let me mention to you a practice with me, that I thought it worth my while to date most of my poetical performances in the earlier part of my life, and this use arose from thence; it served as a register to myself and to inform posterity.

T A S S O.

Nothing like this was my case, and I acknowledge to you my remarkable deficiency in this instance. But yet as to the time of my compositions the world is very well acquainted. I was but just entered my nineteenth year when I published my *Rinaldo*. And this my first work was compleated in the space of ten months. I ventured to send this into the light, flattering myself it would meet with a favourable reception from the world, as a specimen of latent genius, and of still greater things which might be reasonably expected from my future com-

positions. This I then promised †; did any thing like this happen to you?

MILTON.

It did: you know very well there must be gradations in genius. There must be essays and attempts first made before any great work can be brought to perfection. I knew this from the perusal of your works and your life. Both this poem and your *Aminta* were wrote before your *Gierusalemme*. 'Twas the same with Virgil ‡. His Eclogues and Georgics were prior to the *Æneid*. This was in some degree my own case. I had wrote my *Mask*, and *Lycidas*, before I determined to join myself to the illustrious few who have been favoured by the epic muse. With a consciousness of abilities for some future work in heroick poetry, to enlarge my notions and add as much as possible to the extent of that genius which providence had given me, I made the tour of your country, and here my good destiny carried me to the *Marchese di villa* ||. Many conversations as on all subjects of polite literature, so particularly on the sublimest works of the Muses, did I in the most

† Tasso's preface to his *Rinaldo*.

‡ See Virgil's life, by Donatus.

|| The above-named Manso,

friendly



## I L T A S S O. 5

friendly manner hold with him : but still I was undetermined in the choice of my Hero,---I was *long chusing, and beginning late*. In this unsettled state of mind I promised a greater work, which many years after I accomplished.

### T A S S O.

As to our promises the parallel seems to be very near. But what work of your's is to be class'd with the *Rinaldo*.

### M I L T O N.

There is none of mine that bears any resemblance to this : but to make up the equality between us, there are no pieces of your's to be class'd with *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* of mine, and certainly the Mask at Ludlow Castle, is upon as respectable a footing with my countrymen as is the *Aminta* with your's. There is however this difference attending these performances : you have had followers in this, I have had none. You struck out into new paths, I walk'd in old ones, and left all my predecessors far behind me. My subject was new, and Poems of the same species with mine were fashionable among us.

T A S S O.

T A S S O.

But what think you of my great work  
the *Gierusalemme Liberata*?

M I L T O N.

I am entirely of opinion that it deserves  
to be ranked with the *Iliad* and *Æneid* §.  
The subject is as conspicuous as to its  
matter, and invention is brought in to the  
aid of historical facts, as pertinently as in  
either of the antient poets. This noble  
work of your's is a religious Epic, and as  
such engaged my particular attention. I  
cannot help observing, that you have made  
a proper use of that religion which you  
so zealously profess'd; and I know no  
part of your divine Poem, for such I shall  
call it, that makes a more pleasing appear-  
ance than the solemn procession in the  
eleventh book, headed by the projector of  
it, *Il Solitario Piero---il rigido Romito*.  
But it would be impertinent to think of  
reckoning up its numerous beauties.

T A S S O.

It gives me pleasure to find you thus  
partial to my labours: my cotemporaries

§ Prose works, v. 1. p. 60. Ed. 1738.

were



# I L T A S S O. 7

were quite different in their sentiments, and the oppositions they made against it put me out of humour with it : in consequence of which I sat about a *rifacimento* of it, and produced my *Conquistata*.

## M I L T O N.

Every work of man must participate more or less of human frailty: and the greater any one is in his genius and literary accomplishments, the more certain it is that he will be the object of envy and censure. To nothing else can be attributed that ungenerous treatment you received from the members of the celebrated Academy *della Crusca*. They were on all hands determined to support the credit of *Ariosto* that *Romanzatore*. Charm'd by the sweetness of his language, they paid no regard to his subject matter. I shall not hesitate to pronounce your work superior to *Ariosto's*, because it was really heroick, nor is your diction less pleasing. But the preference is due to you on another account, namely, that of invention. If *Ariosto* possess this in as great a degree as his advocates may insist he did, yet he was at most but a follower, and trod in the steps of his predecessors *Pulci* and *Boiardo*. His agents, many of his persons,  
and

8 I L T A S S O.

and particularly his hero, are the same with theirs; and he has adopted their method, especially that singular one, of breaking off his stories abruptly ||.

T A S S O.

Our reputations as poets, by no means depend on any complements or insults paid us while living: Time alone has placed us so high in the temple of fame; impartial posterity has done us that justice which we were conscious we deserved; but received not. But as you was my successor in the epic laurel; may I ask,--- did your divine work of *Paradise Lost* subject you to any male treatment from your countrymen?

M I L T O N.

Quite the reverse: it lay as dormant during my life, as if it had never seen the light. Party so blinded the eyes of Englishmen, that they took no notice of it; and during the reign of that voluptuous Prince, in whose time it came forth, his many subjects threw it by with con-

|| This seems peculiar to romance: For thus Cervantes ends his first book in the middle of a battle.

So Butler facetiously enough---

The adventure of the bear and fiddle

Is sung, but breaks off in the middle.

temptuous



temptuous neglect. All pens were employed, and the mouths of all men were open in praise of a Poet now seldom mentioned, the maker of those poetical blossoms I before spoke of: he happened to espouse a different party from myself, and attracted an universal esteem and respect from all quarters. This was notwithstanding quite temporary fame; for *who now reads Cowley?*

T A S S O.

The fate of *Cowley* was somewhat similar to that of my countryman *Marino*: courted by Princes, and universally revered as he was when living, he is now thrown by, as having set up a new method of versifying, which continued for some time after him, but is now grown into disuse and disesteem. In fact he has robbed the Italian Muses of more honour than he has brought them; for the Moderns I am informed, have generally made their judgments of our poetry from what they have read of his; which is the same thing as to judge of Homer by perusing the works of *Chærilus*.

M I L T O N.

But to come back to the consideration of our two performances, which have rendered

dered our names equally illustrious. Their fate, as it respects ourselves as the authors of them, was nearly the same. You seriously preferred your vamped up, new made *Conquistata*, to your first original production the *Gierusalemme Liberata* \*: nay, you went so far as to pronounce all fools that did not give into your way of thinking. If in this you were in the right, all the rest of mankind were in an error, for they all differed in opinion from you.

TASSO.

'Tis prudent to give up our own sentiments when the generality of men, and particularly those of our friends, are against us. *Angelo Grillo*, a man dear to me on all accounts; but particularly for being the happy instrument of restoring me to my long wish'd for liberty after a tedious imprisonment of seven years at *Ferrara*. -- He has told me without scruple, that the *Gierusalemme Liberata* is *piu bella -- piu buona della Conquistata* †; and therefore I rest it here. And admitting my own error, was you not still guilty of a greater, in preferring that mean performance of yours

\* See *Crescimbeni storia della vulgar poesia*, v. 2. p. 445. Ed. Ven. 1729.

† See *Lettere di Grillo*, Ed. 1604. p. 275.



T A S S O.      ¶¶

the Paradise Regained to your Paradise Lost?  
I called this before the divine Paradise Lost,  
and I was induced to give it this epithet,  
because you have in it executed what I  
thought to have done, and in part did in  
my *Sette Giornate* †; but your plan was  
of a more extensive kind, and different  
from my design.

M I L T O N.

I readily own my mistake; and as you  
mentioned the opinion of your deliverer  
Grillo, let me add that of my rhyming  
acquaintance Dryden, in excuse for myself,  
That an author is the most improper judge  
of the equality, or inferiority of his own  
performances.

T A S S O.

There is one thing which is a certain  
test of merit in both our works, and is,  
that succeeding writers have thought it  
worth while to imitate them.

M I L T O N.

Your observation is just: our followers,  
however, have taken different routs.

† Seven days of the creation, a Poem, by Tasso. Venice,  
1608.

Your's have adopted your manner as far as they were able, and have pen'd their poems wholly in imitation of you. *Sempronii* in his *Boemondo* is one of them. But who could peruse his work after your's? Now among my imitators, the utmost they have aimed at has been my diction; and in this I am informed they all fall short.--- There is another proof of the value of our works which has not been mentioned, and that is their translations\*. You are really obliged to *Fairfax* for the elegant dress in which he has exhibited you to my countrymen.

T A S S O.

What *Fairfax* has done for me *Rolli* has done for you: and I can assure you that he has honoured the Italian Muses by his translation of your spirited Poem: nor are you less obliged to him for spreading abroad your fame by the masterly account which he has given of your life and performances.

M I L T O N.

Let me observe to you another particular respecting my labours. I had once an intention of working the whole of the

\* E. anche segno evidente della stima che si fa d'un' Opera, la Traduzione. Mescolanze di Menagio. Ed. Ven. 1736, p. 77.

*Paradise*



## I L T A S S O. 13

*Paradise Lost* into a dramatick Poem. This Dryden executed, and absurdly enough, in an opera. And not long since a French man has formed an entire tragedy from it §.

### T A S S O.

*Dryden* and the French Poet employ'd their talents much to the same purpose as did *Girolamo Manzoni* by my *Gierusalemme* ||, when he reduced it to a dramatick Poem; and the Spaniard who worked out an heroic (or rather a centoick) Poem from its verses, an honour, if it may be so called, which the works of *Homer* and *Virgil* have alone had the fortune to meet with.

### M I L T O N.

I believe I shall not be arraigned of any adulation to ourselves when I assert, That we possess unrivalled the summits of the modern Parnassus. 'Tis very difficult to distinguish any difference in the height of our respective cliffs: Genius and Invention have placed us both in an equal sublimity. Let us descend then from these heights; and as there seems to have been

§ *Adam & Eve. Tragedie Nouvelle. Imitee de Milton.*  
A Paris, 1741. 8vo.

|| *Crescimbeni, v. 2. p. 453.*

a congenial

a congenial resemblance between us in our poetical capacities, let us discover if there was any likeness between us as moral agents and as men.

TASSO.

Need I mention, in the first place, the duty and affection we bore to our fathers?

MILTON.

Gratitude seems to demand this at our hands; and I can assure you this principally moved me to inscribe some verses to mine, and to consecrate them to his memory. He indeed deserved my utmost esteem on all accounts, not only in the common concerns of life and education in general, but upon this, that he gave me freedom of chusing that course of learning which was most agreeable to myself.

TASSO.

It was the misfortune of my father to be embarked in the cause of the Prince of *Salerno*, who had greatly offended the Emperor Charles the Vth; and mine also, tho' innocent, to be declared a rebel with him. As my father had participated of the Prince's prosperous state, he resolved  
not



not to leave him when his affairs took a different turn. Exiled and flying as he was, he had the good fortune to place me at Rome with a deserving preceptor *Mauritio Cataneo*. From hence he removed me to *Padoua*, and destined me to the pursuit of such studies as I ever had an unconquerable aversion to, and which I never followed with any spirit, or advantage to myself.

**MILTON.**

You mean, I make no doubt, the Study of the civil law there.

**TASSO.**

I do, and I must own to you, I always entered on it with the highest disgust.

**MILTON.**

Your fate in this instance was the same with various other Poets of your country. *Petrarch*, *Ariosto* and *Marino*, were absolutely compelled to the study of the law. How happy was my setting out in life: for such was the affectionate regard of my father towards me, that knowing my turn

to

to letters, he gave me up to the pursuit of them as was most agreeable to my own inclinations, and never compelled me.--

---*Ad leges male custoditaque gentis jura*\*.

T A S S O.

'Twas friendship, 'twas absolute attachment to my welfare that induced my parent to select this profitable knowledge for me. And here my propensity to follow the natural bent of my genius, got the better of my duty to him, and he having been himself a retainer to the Muses, readily overlooked my non-compliance with his intentions.

M I L T O N.

The naming your preceptor, suggests to my memory the agreeable friendship which began in my youth with Mr. Thomas Young, who executed that office by me. I principally conversed with him by letter, and celebrated his services to me in some Latin verses. Providence separated us, and placed us at such a distance from each other, that I could but rarely visit him as I wished; and as he was advanced in years,

\* Ad patrem, v. 71.



fate soon put a stop to all friendly inter-  
course betwixt us. As I had a real love  
for him, who was my domestick tutor, so  
was I not wanting in all due esteem for  
my publick instructor Mr. *Alexander*  
*Gill* \*.

T A S S O.

Our good Fortunes were nearly alike in  
this essential point in life. There were  
none of my acquaintance, unfortunate as  
I was, more faithful to me (with pleasure  
I tell it you) than *Mauritio Cataneo*. 'Twas  
his fate to survive me. I always found  
his house a safe Asylum, as often as my  
affairs called me to *Rome*. His hospitable  
doors were to none more readily open than  
to myself. I had the good fortune also of  
having the assistance of *Seignor Speroni* in  
my juvenile studies; his merit is so diffused,  
that he needed none of my weak endea-  
vours to render his name more conspicu-  
ous; but however, he has lost no reputa-  
tion by his care of me. I valued him  
much, and paid great deference to him on  
my father's account, as he was his very  
particular friend; and has introduced him  
as one of his Interlocutori in his Dialogues.

\* Vide Ep. Fam. no. 5. and Wood's account of this  
person. Ath. Oxon.

For this species of writing, I was indebted to the antients, and to *Speroni*.

MILTON.

Let us now take our several ways, and for the present bid adieu to each other: and if it will be agreeable to you, let us at a fit season visit your great predecessors in the laurel, my old acquaintance *Dante* and *Petrarcha* †.

TASSO.

Most eligible will be this interview: and to make the assemblage still more pleasing, *Petrarcha* shall introduce you to his *Laura*, and *Dante* shall present you to his *Buon Maestro* ‡, and him §,

-----*Con la spada in mano*  
*Homero poeta sovrano.---*  
---*e la bella schola*  
*Di quel Signor dell' altissimo Canto.*

† Milton's prose works, v. 1. p. 111. v. 2. p. 570.

‡ Virgil.

§ Inferno, Canto 4. and him with the sword in his hand (so Dante describes Homer) the sovereign Poet,---and the fine school of that master of the sublimest song.

MILTON.



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M I L T O N.

This will realize to me *Plato's Elyfium* ||,  
and with this in view my valediction  
attends you.

T A S S O.

Till next we meet then farewell.

|| Par. Lost, b. 3.

F I N I S.



LETTERS

MILTON.

This will realize to me what I have  
and with this in view my resignation  
attends you.

TASSO.

Till next we meet then farewell.

I am, Sir, your  
Obedt. Servant

FINIS.

